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Senate Bill _____
By _____

House No. HB0804
By Whitson

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 68, to establish the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program of Tennessee. This act appropriates a sum sufficient to fund the administration and operation of the program herein established for fiscal year 1995-1996.

WHEREAS, health care reform is occurring at the state and national levels that promotes an emphasis on primary care; and

WHEREAS, many rural and urban communities within Tennessee lack access to adequate health care; and

WHEREAS, difficulties in the recruitment and retention of health care professionals to rural and urban underserved communities affects the availability, accessibility and quality of health care in these communities; and

WHEREAS, decentralized, community-academic partnerships have been proven effective in generating solutions to improve the availability, accessibility and quality of health care in rural and urban underserved communities; and

WHEREAS, minority and underprivileged individuals are poorly represented in the health professions workforce and experience has proven that minority and underprivileged individuals

trained as health care professionals are more likely to choose to practice in rural and urban underserved communities; and

WHEREAS, appropriation of state resources is required to generate matching support from the federal government to address issues of availability, accessibility and quality of health care in rural and urban underserved communities; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 68, Chapter 1, is amended by adding Sections 2 through 12 inclusive of this act as a new, appropriately designated part.

SECTION 2. The general assembly finds and declares that the activities and programs specified in this act have proven effective in Tennessee and the nation as means to recruit individuals from rural and urban underserved communities to enter primary health care professions. These activities and programs will also increase the number of primary health care professionals who choose to practice and continue practicing in rural and urban underserved communities. By increasing the number of primary care health care professionals and retaining existing practitioners in rural and urban underserved communities, the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program of Tennessee will improve the availability, accessibility and quality of health care in these communities. Improved health among Tennessee's rural and urban underserved community residents will contribute to more viable and economically productive communities.

SECTION 3. The general assembly further finds and declares that state financial support for AHEC activities within Tennessee is an essential criterion of the federal government in determining the eligibility for continued federal financial support. The intent of the federal government is that states assume financial responsibility for AHEC programs after receiving federal funds for initial planning, development and start-up. State financial support is also necessary to generate matching federal contributions that can amount up to a one-to-one match of federal dollars.

SECTION 4. There is hereby established the Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program of Tennessee. For administrative purposes only, the AHEC program shall be attached to the department of health. The mission of the AHEC Program of Tennessee shall be to use educational interventions through community-academic partnerships. The AHEC Program of Tennessee shall accomplish this mission by promoting wellness, prevention, primary care and the recruitment of minority and underprivileged individuals into health care professions.

SECTION 5. The mission of the AHEC Program of Tennessee shall be accomplished by:

- (1) Programs to recruit primary, secondary and post-secondary students into primary health care professions;
- (2) Programs designed to recruit health professions students and primary care medical residents to practice primary care in rural and urban underserved communities in Tennessee; and
- (3) Educational programs designed to support practicing health care professionals in rural and urban underserved communities.

SECTION 6.

(a) In order to effectuate the provisions of Section 5(1), the AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall collaboratively develop a health careers manual targeted at the youth of Tennessee. The health careers manual shall be produced commencing in fiscal year 1995-1996 and updated biennially thereafter.

(b) The AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall also develop and implement programs designed to interest the youth of Tennessee in entering primary health care professions, such programs may include, but shall not be limited to health fairs, mentoring programs, field experiences, and enrichment activities.

SECTION 7.

(a) In order to effectuate the provisions of Section 5(2), the AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall maintain and enhance existing programs and develop new community-based education and training programs for health professions students and primary care medical residents in rural and urban underserved communities throughout Tennessee. Such programs shall be made available to health professions students and primary care medical residents from all health professions training institutions within Tennessee. Students from non-Tennessee institutions may also participate in such training programs on an at-cost basis and based upon the availability of spaces; provided, however, no student from a Tennessee institution shall be displaced from participation in such programs by the participation of an out-of-state student.

(b) To promote an increasing number of medical school graduates to enter the primary care specializations of family medicine, general internal medicine, and general pediatrics and to practice in rural and underserved urban communities of Tennessee, all state-supported medical schools shall be required to place their medical students in AHEC-sponsored one-week preceptorships with a primary care physician during each student's freshman and sophomore years. Such preceptorships shall commence no later than the 1996-97 academic year for the freshman class and no later than the 1997-98 academic year for the sophomore class. Development of the above described AHEC preceptorships shall be contingent upon the appropriation of adequate resources to fund the preceptorship experiences.

(c) To ensure that health professions students and primary care medical residents receive quality training experiences in rural and urban underserved communities, the AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry

Medical College shall recruit, train, and provide professional support for community-based faculty.

(d) To promote health professions students' and medical residents' participation in community-based training experiences, the AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall collaboratively develop and maintain a computerized data base of clinical sites available within Tennessee for health professions students and primary care medical residents' field experiences. All health professions training institutions within Tennessee shall be permitted access to the computerized listing of community-based field training sites.

(e) To promote health professions students' and primary care medical residents' interest in practicing in rural and underserved communities, individuals participating in such field experiences shall be eligible for reimbursement for travel expenses and living expenses actually incurred as a result of their participation in such field experiences. All such reimbursements for travel expenses and living expenses shall be in accordance with the provisions of regulations promulgated by the department of health. The AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall be responsible for administering all eligible health professions students' and primary care medical residents' field experiences funded by this act.

(f) In response to the changing health care systems in Tennessee and the nation that increasingly utilize multidisciplinary team approaches to health care delivery, the AHEC programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall promote multidisciplinary training of health professions students and medical residents in AHEC-supported activities.

SECTION 8.

(a) In order to effectuate the provisions of Section 5(3), the AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall develop and

present professional development programs that address the local needs of primary health care professionals in rural and urban underserved communities within Tennessee. The purpose of such professional development programs is to improve the health status of Tennesseans in rural and urban underserved communities by promoting wellness, primary care, prevention, and quality health care delivery.

(b) Because quality health care delivery is dependent upon health care professionals' timely access to information about the latest medical and health care discoveries, and because the isolation and difficulties associated with practicing in rural and urban underserved communities limits health care professionals' access to information about the latest discoveries in their fields, the AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall maintain and enhance existing information dissemination systems and develop new and innovative information dissemination systems using appropriate technologies, including telecommunications technologies, to ensure that health care professionals in rural and urban underserved communities have timely access to the latest medical and health care discoveries.

SECTION 9. To promote wellness and reduce health care costs in Tennessee's rural and urban underserved communities, the AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall develop consumer health promotion programs. The consumer education programs shall be thoroughly integrated with the AHECs' educational programs targeted at health professions students, primary care medical residents, and practicing health care professionals.

SECTION 10. The AHEC Programs at East Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College shall individually report to the department of health on an annual basis relative to the statutory mission of the AHEC of Tennessee Program and the progress such programs have made in fulfilling such mission.

SECTION 11. The activities and programs authorized by this act shall not duplicate other services, programs or activities provided by any department, board, commission or other governmental authority or entity of state government.

SECTION 12. Any income generated as a result of programs or activities authorized by the provisions of this act shall not revert to the general fund at the end of the fiscal year, but shall be maintained by the AHEC program of Tennessee and shall be reinvested to further the mission of the program as stated in Section 4 of this act.

SECTION 13.

(a) There is hereby appropriated the sum of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) to fund the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program of Tennessee for fiscal year 1995-1996.

(b) The appropriation provided for in subsection (a) to fund the AHEC Program of Tennessee for fiscal year 1995-1996 shall be allocated as follows:

(1) Twenty-five percent (25%) to the Northeast Tennessee Area Health Education Center Program at East Tennessee State University; and

(2) Seventy-five percent (75%) to the Tennessee Area Health Education Center Program at Meharry Medical College.

SECTION 14. The commissioner of health is authorized to promulgate rules and regulations to effectuate the purposes of this act. All such rules and regulations shall be promulgated in accordance with the provisions of Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 4, Chapter 5.

SECTION 15. For the purpose of promulgating rules and regulations, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it. For all other purposes, this act shall take effect July 1, 1995.